

VZCZCXYZ0000
PP RUEHWEB

DE RUEHBO #7998/01 3122110
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 082110Z NOV 07
FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
TO RHEHAAA/WHITE HOUSE WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0053
INFO RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA 7858
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS 9520
RUEHPE/AMEMBASSY LIMA 5610
RUEHZP/AMEMBASSY PANAMA 0801
RUEHQT/AMEMBASSY QUITO 6237

C O N F I D E N T I A L BOGOTA 007998

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

USTR FOR MCARRILLO STATE FOR WHA/EPSC AND EEB/TPP/BTA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/07/2017
TAGS: [ETRD](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [ECON](#) [OVIP](#) [USTR](#) [USDA](#) [CO](#)
SUBJECT: USTR SCHWAB-LED CODEL DISCUSSES COLOMBIA TRADE
PROMOTION AGREEMENT WITH PRESIDENT URIBE

Classified By: AMBASSADOR WILLIAM R. BROWNFIELD FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) & (D)

[1](#)1. (U) Sunday, November 3, 2007; 8:00 - 10:00 a.m.

[1](#)2. (U) Participants:

U.S.
USTR Ambassador Susan Schwab
Acting Secretary of Agriculture Chuck Conner
Ambassador William R. Brownfield
Senator Lindsey Graham (R-SC)
Senator Blanche Lincoln (D-AK)
Senator Maria Cantwell (D-WA)
Rep. John Tanner (D-TN)
Rep. Roger Wicker (R-MS)
Rep. Dennis Cardoza (D-CA)
Rep. Bob Goodlatte (R-VA)
Demetrios Marantis - Majority Trade Counsel, SFC
Robert Holifield - Office of Sen. Lincoln
Jen Olson - Office of Sen. Graham
Jonathan Hale - Office of Sen. Cantwell
Kevin Kramp - House Ag Committee
David Burns, Office of Rep. Tanner
AUSTR Everett Eissenstat
AUSTR Sean Spicer
DAUSTR Andy Olson
USDA Deputy U/S Ellen Terpstra
USDA A/S Linda Strachen
USDA Communications Director Terri Teuber
Economic Counselor Larry Gumbiner
Deputy Economic Counselor William Popp (notetaker)

Colombia
President Alvaro Uribe
Minister of Defense, Juan Manuel Santos
Minister of Trade, Luis Plata
Colombian Ambassador to the U.S. Carolina Barco
Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs Camilo Reyes
Vice Minister of Agriculture Fernando Arbelaez
National Reintegration Program Director Frank Pearl
Special Envoy for FTA, Sandra Suarez
Secretary to the President, Alicia Arango

SIPDIS
MFA Coordinator for North America, Patricia Cortes
Trade Ministry Advisor Santiago Ospina

[1](#)3. (C) SUMMARY: USTR Ambassador Schwab, Acting USDA Secretary

Conner and Members of Congress met with President Uribe regarding the importance of the U.S.-Colombian Trade Promotion Agreement (CTPA) to Colombia's economic and political development. Schwab and Conner both praised Colombia's progress, reiterated President Bush's commitment to the CTPA, and noted that the USG continues to encourage Members of Congress to visit Colombia and see the progress for themselves. President Uribe outlined Colombia's advances on security, counternarcotics, human rights and poverty reduction. He reiterated his government's commitment to eliminating impunity and asked that the U.S. Congress not delay approving the CTPA, which he said Colombia needs to consolidate its gains. Members of Congress congratulated the Uribe Administration on its successes and inquired about local union opposition to the CTPA, progress on prosecutions of labor violence, reintegration efforts, and public security. END SUMMARY

Not Paradise, But Getting Better

14. (C) President Uribe explained that Colombia has made significant progress, with USG assistance, in reducing violence, establishing state authority in large areas of the country, and increasing economic opportunity. Noting that previous Congressional delegations had suggested the GOC make a dramatic movement to demonstrate improvements, the President hailed the October 28 local and departmental elections as a tangible indicator of the GOC's progress in dismantling paramilitary and guerrilla influence. The President described the low level of violence and the large increase in the number of candidates participating (87,000 in 2007 vs. 45,000 in 2000) as proof that Colombia has successfully recovered state authority throughout the country. He characterized the CTPA as vital to economically and politically reinforcing these gains.

The Stakes

15. (C) President Uribe stated that "we are winning (against illegal armed groups), but we have not won yet". He added that while the CTPA may not hold great economic significance for the U.S., the agreement remains very important to fostering private investment in Colombia. Only through such increased investment and business activity can Colombia continue to reduce the poverty that fuels coca cultivation and insurgency. Politically, President Uribe said the agreement was important for both countries. He stressed Colombia's position as the United States' closet ally in the region and its willingness to work closely with the U.S. despite trends in the region pushing back against pluralism and economic liberalization. The President noted that failure to pass the CTPA would put the GOC in the awkward position of explaining to Colombians and others in the region why the U.S. entered into free trade agreements with other nations but not with Colombia.

16. (C) Representative Goodlatte asked whether Venezuela's interference in the region would increase. President Uribe noted that Colombia's long border with Venezuela and its growing trade relationship required the GOC to handle its relationship with Venezuela carefully. The President said that he has frank private conversations with President Chavez to encourage Venezuela to uphold democratic values and cooperate more closely with Colombia against illegal armed groups. In public, however, he speaks cautiously to avoid direct conflict. The President indicated that a CTPA failure will make it more difficult to defend the democratic values and cooperation with the U.S. that Colombia now represents in the region.

Union Opposition and Efforts to Reduce Impunity

17. (C) In response to a question from Representative Wicker about labor union opposition to the CTPA, President Uribe

said he meets every six weeks with union leaders to discuss their concerns on labor issues as well as the CTPA. He explained that public sector unions opposed the CTPA for political purposes due to their resistance to Uribe administration efforts to reform public sector companies. He pointed out that private sector unions expressed much more support as they had a direct interest in increasing investment to expand employment and restructure failing industries.

¶18. (C) Senator Cantwell noted the high number of unsolved cases of violence against labor leaders and encouraged the GOC to take all steps possible to eliminate impunity. She said slow progress on prosecutions fueled the belief that some in Colombia do not want to see justice served. President Uribe responded that the overall number of homicides in Colombia, including against union members, fell from almost 35,000 in 2002 to 17,400 in 2006 and that the GOC expected a further five percent decrease in 2007. He emphasized that his administration had committed to doing even more to bring down this rate. For example, despite fiscal constraints, the GOC continued to increase the number of unionists, journalists, and human rights activists in the national protection program, at a cost of over USD 40 million in 2007. Likewise, under the new accusatory criminal justice system, prosecutions now move more rapidly. The President said the GOC would begin providing regular monthly updates on prosecutions to the U.S. Congress.

¶19. (C) President Uribe also pointed out that his administration, unlike previous ones, had not given blanket amnesty to paramilitaries or guerrillas but rather required confession, reparation and justice with prison sentences and disbarment from public office. He contrasted this approach with the pardons previous administrations gave to M-19 guerrillas in the 1980s and 1990s that allowed some of them to now serve in the Colombian congress. The President added that the GOC had extradited almost 700 narcotics traffickers and criminals to the United States in the last five years versus only 60 prior to his administration.

Progress on Reintegration and Public Security

¶10. (C) Senator Lincoln praised efforts in Medellin to reintegrate displaced and demobilized persons and asked about GOC plans to replicate the efforts nationwide. The President said the GOC had demobilized 46,000 former illegal combatants to date and continues integrating displaced persons as well. However, finding employment remains difficult. National Reintegration Director Frank Pearl said that of the 19,000 demobilized combatants now employed, 74 percent worked in the informal economy. He stressed that the CTPA institutes the best way to encourage the investment needed to create formal sector jobs and economic opportunity for these vulnerable populations.

¶11. (C) Rep. Tanner suggested that the GOC redouble efforts to convey in Washington its progress in expanding state presence and public security in Colombia. President Uribe welcomed the suggestion and highlighted GOC increases in security spending as well as its progress in reducing narcotics cultivation. However, he said Colombia's vast areas, difficult terrain, and long delays in receiving military equipment purchased from the U.S. complicated efforts to completely eliminate the threat posed by narco-terrorists.

¶12. (U) Ambassador Schwab, Secretary Conner and the Congressional delegation have not cleared this message.
Brownfield